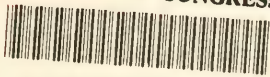


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THE RUBY RING

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ANITA VIVANTI CHARTRES



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THE RUBY RING.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TOM CARRINGTON,

GRACE CARRINGTON, his wife.

FIFINE LA CORDERIE, a French girl.

REGINALD WILKINS, an Englishman.

JACOB ROSENSTEIN, a jeweler.

SERVANT.

(The curtain rises discovering TOM putting on his overcoat and getting ready to go out. He goes across stage with his hat at the back of his head, opens door L. and talks to someone inside.)

TOM.

Well, ta-ta, Gracie, *(lighting his cigar)*. I shall be back at seven. Eh? No! No, I don't think I shall come in for tea. I—I don't care much for tea, anyway. Bad for my nerves, you know.

(Turns away smiling, with hand on the door.)

Don't mope, there's a dear girl.

(Closes door and turns to go, whistling.)
(Enter FIFINE, very chic, very French, very dashingly dressed. Hurries in through M. entrance and almost falls into TOM'S arms. She rattles off her speeches volubly, with the French "r" pronounced in her throat.)

FIFINE.

Oh! (*In French.*) Pardon! Pardon! You are Mr. Carrington, no? Gracie's husband! How is Gracie? You are quite nice looking. I am so glad for Gracie? Ah! Gracie was so good, so dear. An angel! In school—we were at school together—I am Fifine La Corderie—(*very guttural r's.*)

TOM.

Delighted.

FIFINE.

(*With sweeping curtsey.*)

Thank you. In school we used to call Gracie "Grracious Goodness" for short.

TOM.

For short?

FIFINE.

Well, not for short, but because she was so good—so good.

TOM.

She is still (*imitating her*) so good.

FIFINE.

(*Clasping her hands.*)

What? Married, and still—still "Gracious Goodness!" Ah, that is a mistake on her part—or (*glancing slyly at him*) on yours! You are going out? Good-by. Let me see Gracie.

TOM.

(Crosses back to door L. opening door.)

My dear, here is a young lady—Miss Lacr-r-r-something—to see you. She says she was at school with you.

(Enter GRACE slowly. She is dressed in white, with soft, parted hair and gentle expression.)

FIFINE.

Grracie!!

GRACE.

Fifine! Dear! I am so glad to see you.

(FIFINE flings herself into GRACE'S arms and kisses her wildly three or four times.)

FIFINE.

I have just come back from Brussels. Ah, Br-r-ussels! It is even worse than Paris! *(Clasping her hands.)* Ah, much worse! Much nicer!!

GRACE.

(Laughing.)

You must tell me all about it.

FIFINE.

(Excitedly.)

No! You must tell—

(Suddenly remembers TOM and turns to him.)

Ah, so sorry you cannot stay. You insist upon going? Desolated! Good-by.

(Extends her hand.)

So sorry if I never see you again. Desolated!

(*To GRACE, in loud aside so as to be heard by TOM.*)

Beautiful eyes he has!

TOM.

But surely you will stay and take tea here.

FIFINE.

(*To Grace.*)

If I may.

(*To Tom.*)

But do you come home for tea?

TOM.

Oh—oh—yes. I—I like tea. It is good for my nerves, you know. Yes. I shall be back to tea.

GRACE.

(*Astonished.*)

Oh, Tom! Really?

TOM.

Why, yes.

GRACE.

Oh! I am *so* glad.

FIFINE.

(*Quickly aside to Grace.*)

Don't do that. Bad for him.

(*To TOM curtseying.*)

Au revoir.

TOM.

Au revoir.

(GRACE presses his hand. Exit TOM.)

FIFINE.

Why did you say, "Oh, so glad?"

GRACE.

Because I was.

FIFINE.

All the more reason for not saying so.

(Sits down, taking off her hat, puffing up her hair, putting her feet on a stool and fluffing her skirts around her.)

Now tell me all about it.

GRACE.

(Sitting near her.)

About what?

FIFINE.

About honeymoons, and husbands, and wedding tours.

GRACE.

Oh, of course. *(Hesitating.)* We went to London and Paris. And we crossed on the Majestic. And—and—London is a very large city—

FIFINE.

(Leaning back and closing her eyes.)

Wake me up when you've finished with the geogr-r-aphical part.

GRACE.

Well, what am I to tell you?

FIFINE.

The honeymoon part.

GRACE.

(Sententiously.)

There's nothing to it.

FIFINE.

Not? *(Nodding her head.)* I thought as much. And aren't you happy? *(GRACE shakes her head.)* Not at all? Not with his eyes so beautiful! And that lovely trousseau that you had—those dreams of dresses? You are not happy?

GRACE.

(Bursting into tears.)

I am miserable. It is all wrong, all wretched! I wish I were at school, I wish I had never married, I wish we were all dead.

FIFINE.

(Solemnly, looking at her.)

I am desolated.

GRACE.

He is cruel and heartless. He came home after half-past seven yesterday evening, *(weeping)* and the dinner was horrid. And my hair was out of curl, I had cried so and washed my face so often. And I resolved that I would be a stranger to him, and he never even noticed it. And he *(sobbing)* ate a huge

dinner! Boohoo! And he only kissed my cheek when he went out this morning; and he only turned round four times to look up at the window, and NOT (*with a great burst of tears*) when he got to the corner!

FIFINE.

The brrute!

GRACE.

What shall I do? What shall I do?

FIFINE.

You must leave him for ever.

GRACE.

(*Weeping.*)

But I love him so.

FIFINE.

(*Horrificd.*)

Does he know it? Have you told him so?

GRACE.

(*Eagerly.*)

No! (*Pause.*) Not since lunch.

(FIFINE takes out her watch. GRACE continues shamefacedly.)

We lunch at one. It's almost half-past two now.

FIFINE.

But you told him this morning? (GRACE nods.)
And yesterday? And always—you are always telling him that you love him!

GRACE.

(Desperately.)

Yes, I am.

FIFINE.

What makes you do it? Do you want to drive him from you?

GRACE.

(Sitting on footstool at FIFINE'S feet.)

Oh Fifine, I want to be a model wife to him. I am gentle, I am sweet tempered, I am loving, I am economical.

FIFINE.

Ah! Fatal! Fatal!

GRACE.

I try to be always the same to him.

FIFINE.

(Exclaiming.)

You miserable creature! A man never wants the same. You must be different every time he sees you.

GRACE.

(Continuing.)

I mend things for him—

FIFINE.

(Starting up and catching her by the wrist. In horrified whisper.)

His socks? Have you mended his socks? Has he seen you do it? (GRACE *nods.*) Then he has already betrayed you!

GRACE.

(*With a cry.*)

No!

FIFINE.

He must have. They always do. (*Gravely and sentimentiously.*) No wife that lets her husband see her mending his socks can keep that husband faithful. Have you looked through his pockets?

GRACE.

Not *all* of them.

FIFINE.

That overcoat?

(*Points to hall where overcoat hangs.*)

GRACE.

(*Nodding.*)

Yes.

FIFINE.

His dress suit?

GRACE.

No.

FIFINE.

(*Excited.*)

When did he have it on?

GRACE.

(*Also excited.*)

Last night. Oh dear!

FIFINE.

Go. Fetch it. We will look. Poor Gracie!
Ah, these Anglo-Saxon wives——

(GRACE goes. FIFINE follows her and talks to the door.)

who still believe in being good to their husbands. When I marry *R-reginald*, I shall manage him in French, not in English. I shall be *st-r-range*, I shall be unwholesome, I shall be unexpected, I shall be impossible! Ah, *R-reginald*!

(*Re-enter GRACE with dress suit.*)

GRACE.

If I find anything I shall die!

FIFINE.

Let me see.

(*They sit on the floor and go hurriedly through the pockets. They take out a pair of gloves and a silk handkerchief, which FIFINE sniffs at.*)

GRACE.

(*With a shriek, holding a piece of paper crushed in her hand.*)

Ah!! I have found something.

FIFINE.

Give it to me. I will read it. Hold my hand.
(*Opens paper carefully.*) Ah!

GRACE.

(*Hysterically.*)

What is it?

FIFINE.

(*Sepulchrally reading.*)

“My dear boy—” vulgar creature! They always call men their dear boys.

GRACE.

Who is it? Give it to me.

(*Grasps it and reads.*)

“Do not ask me this month for any more money.”
It's all right. It's from his father.

FIFINE.

But only think from whom it *might* have been.
You are too trusting, too——

(*She stops and reads a picce of paper.
Her eyes dilate.*)

Ah, here it is! Here is the proof. (*Reads.*)
“Huitres—bisque d'écrévisse—homard——”

GRACE.

What is that?

FIFINE.

A bill of fare! A French bill of fare! Two portions of everything! And such things! Martini cocktails, caviare, oysters, foie gras, devilled lobster—my dear, do not tell me that that is a moral bill of fare! And Clicquot—two bottles! Oh, Gracie! Poor Gracie!

GRACE.

How infamous! How disgraceful! But, Fifine—he might have been with a—another man.

FIFINE.

Oh, Gracie, what nonsense! Why, there is the *grr*reatest difference between men's and women's bills of fare. Now look at this. Martini cocktails, caviare, (*Crescendo*), foie gras, devilled lobster——

(*Hitting her finger on the card.*)

there was a *woman* here, I tell you, a woman.
(*Pauses.*) And probably a blonde.

GRACE.

Oh, F'fine! Oh, F'fine!

FIFINE.

(*Consulting card.*)

It was in *Paris*! You know the things that Americans and English do in *Paris*! When was he in *Paris*?

GRACE.

(*Despairingly.*)

On our wedding tour. Never before nor after.
(*Wildly.*) F'fine! You do not think that then—
then he was taking creatures, blonde creatures, to dinner?

FIFINE.

Yes. It was then. Here you have the *proof*.

GRACE.

Infamous! Disgraceful!

FIFINE.

I am desolated.

GRACE.

But what ought I to do? What ought I to do?

FIFINE.

(*Dramatically.*)

You must win him back.

GRACE.

(Perplexed.)

Must I? Doesn't it seem rather soon? We've only been married four months.

FIFINE.

My dear, you see (*pointing to bill of fare*) a woman must sometimes begin winning a husband back before they've been married four days.

GRACE.

But how am I to do it?

FIFINE.

Scare him, startle him, surprise him. Make him anxious, make him jealous, make him miserable. Why, with *R-reginald*, I am always doing things—taking poison; being shot at by a frenzied lover; having diamond rings sent to me by passionate suitors—and I am not married to him yet!

GRACE.

Perhaps you never will be.

FIFINE.—(*Continuing.*)

And *R-reginald* adores me. He *trrembles* always and always wonders what next. And he is beautiful and languid and English—oh so be-autiffully English!

(Imitates walk and tired expression.)

GRACE.

But what shall *I* do? I am afraid of poison, and nobody will shoot me, and——

FIFINE.

You only pretend about the poison. You write a letter to Tom, and leave an empty arsenic bottle around, and powder your face in a darkened room. As for the shooting, you cut a hole through the sleeve of an old waist and burn the edges a little, and you put a little piece of mustard plaster on your arm where the bullet grazed past you; and you refuse to divulge the man's name!

(Attitude.)

That is very French, verry exciting.

GRACE.

I can't do it, Fifine.

FIFINE.

Then do the jewelry business. Get a man to send you a priceless gem.

GRACE.

I don't know a soul that would do such a thing. Men don't.

FIFINE.

No. Not easily. But you go to a jeweler; you select your ring; you take it on approval. You send it to yourself with a note and a bunch of flowers; then your husband makes scene of jealousy; you win him back; and you return ring to jeweller who refunds you the money.—Ha!

GRACE.

Oh! That's lovely! I'll do it to-morrow.

FIFINE.

Do it now. I know a jeweler down the street. I'll go and choose the ring for you. You're not dressed.

GRACE.

Oh, you darling! Run along.

(Goes to desk and gets purse. Opens and counts money.)

Here. I have fifty—sixty—sixty-two dollars. Get me a stunner for sixty; and two dollars for the flowers. *(Clapping her hands.)* Go on! Poor Tom!

(As FIFINE turns to take her pocketbook from table.)

Run along—never mind. Take my purse.

(Hurries FIFINE out, who goes, laughing.)

GRACE.

(Alone.)

What fun! What fun! How I like the idea of winning him back! If only all wives would take the trouble to win their husbands back, what a peaceful place the world would be!

(Sees FIFINE's purse on the table. Takes it up.)

She's forgotten her purse. How fat it is. Love letters I suppose.

(Takes out scraps of paper and reads.)

"Cucumber, milk and lemon. Rub on at night to prevent wrinkles." "Hair wash: to impart golden lustre and fashionable reddish tint"—Oh!

(Puts it in the bosom of her dress. Draws visiting card from purse. Reading.)

“Mr. R. B. Wilkins, Madison Square.” That’s close by.

(Opening another piece of paper.)

“To impart passionate glow to eyes, annoint eyelids with—” Oh! this might help me to win him back. I’ll copy it.

(Sits down to write. Hears voices and hurriedly puts paper back in the purse. The visiting card falls out on the floor and remains there. Enter FIFINE with ROSENSTEIN.)

GRACE.

What! Back already?

FIFINE.

Dear, this is Mr. Rosenstein. He has brought a ring to show you. He would not let me have it for sixty dollars.

ROSENSTEIN.

(With Jewish accent and gestures, and a rolling “r.”)

Ach, Lady, I haf here a ring, a vahnderful Ruby Ring. *(Hands her a case.)* Tree hahndred dahlars! Vahnderful Ring!

GRACE.

But I haven’t got——

FIFINE.

Nonsense. Mr. Rosenstein, you said two hundred and fifty in the store; and you meant two; and you’d take a hundred and fifty, and we’re going to give you a hundred: And you’ll take sixty on account.

ROSENSTEIN.

Ach! Vaht a vahnderr̄ful calculator! Vaht a beesiness voman! Vaht I gif to haf such a beesiness voman in my beesiness!

FIFINE,

Well, you leave us the ring. Here are sixty dollars on account, and you shall have the *rest* to-morrow or the ring back.

ROSENSTEIN.

Ach, but that vahnderful R-ruby R-ring—I cahn not—that R-ruby R-ring is vorth——

FIFINE.

That *rruby rring* is going to stay here, and you give us a receipt. (*Writes.*)

ROSENSTEIN.

(*To GRACE.*)

That R-roooby alone is vorth two hahndrred dahlars!

GRACE.

(*Innocntly.*)

Is it?

FIFINE.

(*Having written.*)

Here. “Received of Mrs. Carrington sixty dollars on account for *ruby ring*.” Sign it.

ROSENSTEIN.

Ach, but the R-roooby alone——

FIFINE.

Nonsense, nonsense. Sign it.

ROSENSTEIN.

(Sighing)

Ach! Vaht a beesiness voman! Vaht she make me do! And if you change your mind I R-risk lose a sale!

FIFINE.

Good-bye, good-bye, Mr. Rosenstein.

(Hurries him out.)

ROSENSTEIN.

But if I lose a sale!—

(Exit.)

GRACE.

What a joke! I feel so excited. Now, what do I do next? It's four o'clock. Tom will be back—

FIFINE.

(Starting.)

Four o'clock! What! And I have an appointment with Rreginald at three thirty!

GRACE.

But, my dear, you said you'd stay to tea.

FIFINE.

(Excitedly.)

I forgot the appointment! I forgot Rreginald! Ah, how could I!

(Puts on her gloves hurriedly.)

GRACE.

But what shall I do about the ruby ring?

(Bell rings violently. GRACE starts.)

Who's that?

FIFINE.

(Going towards M. E.)

It's the boy with the flowers. I ordered them at the corner as I came along.

(Takes flowers from someone off, and comes down stage again.)

GRACE.

How you *do* think of everything! But what am I to do now?

FIFINE.

(Embracing her.)

If you love me, you let me go to *R*reginald. He was to meet me at *R*ector's. I am sure he has given me up—

(She powders her face rapidly with pocket-puff while she speaks.)

and I have missed him and he will be heartbroken. If he has gone, I shall come back to you for tea.

GRACE.

(Trying to detain her.)

But how shall I—?

FIFINE.

(Hurriedly.)

You write your love letter to yourself. And don't be afraid about making it passionate. Good-by, dear.

(Kisses her at the door.)

GRACE.

Oh, Ffine! I don't know what to say.

FIFINE.

Say: "My adorrred Grracie:—This little rrruby rring is only a wrrretched token—" that kind of thing. Ta! Ta!

(Runs off.)

GRACE.

Oh dear, oh dear!

FIFINE.

(Running back.)

And don't use your own letter paper.

(Exit, laughing.)

GRACE.

(Alone. Looking round her.)

Well, here I am with my flowers and my jewels.
In for a penny—

(Takes pen and paper from desk and brings them to the table, front.)

in for a pound.

(Picks up visiting card from the floor as she passes and looks at it carelessly.)

This R. B. Wilkins again. I've stolen him from Ffine. I don't suppose she'll miss him.

(Tosses the card aside and sits down to write.)

I'll use this pad. Now then, what did she say?

(Imitating FIFINE'S throaty "r's.")

"My adorrred Grracie." What nonsense! I am ashamed to write it. And I must disguise my handwriting.

(Business. Finally writes standing up, twisting herself half round the table.)

“My adored Gracie.” Now what? (*Writing.*)
 “This little ruby ring—” Oh! What rubbish! I’m
 not going to do it. There! I won’t. If I can’t win
 Tom back without such— Who’s that?

(*Crumples the paper up and hides it in
 guilty haste as TOM enters.*)

TOM.

(*Coming in cheerfully.*)

Well? Tea ready? (*Surprised.*) Why, where’s
 Mademoiselle Crrr? Not gone?

GRACE.

(*Nervously.*)

Yes—no—she’s coming back—she’s gone out—

TOM.

Why, I thought she’d stay to tea.

GRACE.

(*Getting rid of the paper and talking
 lightly.*)

She couldn’t. She remembered an appointment
 and she——

TOM.

(*Taking up the flowers.*)

Who sent these? Pretty.

(*Smells them.*)

GRACE.

(*Aside.*)

Oh, I shall never *dare* to do it!

(*To TOM, Stammering.*)

They’re—they—they belong to F’fine.

TOM.

Do they? I didn't see her bring them in.

GRACE.

(Hurriedly.)

No. She sent for them.

TOM.

Did she? What for?

GRACE.

To—to—to take with her.

TOM.

Well, why did she leave them here?

(Looks at GRACE, who stares at him with a bewildered face.)

GRACE.

(With a forced smile.)

She bought them for me. She's—She's always so thoughtful.

TOM.

What's the matter, Gracie?

GRACE.

(Exaggeratedly unconcerned.)

Nothing. Nothing at all.

TOM.

What are you telling me fibs for?

GRACE.

(Indignant.)

Oh—oh, Tom! Fibs!! How can you?

(TOM has been staring at the jewel case on the table. GRACE follows his glance with agitated gaze. She tries to sit up on the table and hide it from him.)

How—how can you accuse me of——

TOM.

What's that you are trying to hide?

GRACE.

Hide? I?

TOM.

(Putting out his hand to take the box.)

Yes. You.

GRACE.

(Bewildered, clutching at the box.)

No! Don't! I'm not ready yet—I mean—it's nothing really—it's——

(TOM takes box from her and opens it.)

TOM.

The deuce! Where does this come from? Is it Fifi's?

GRACE.

(Eagerly and earnestly.)

No!

TOM.

Oh! Whose is it? Yours?

GRACE.

(Smiling painfully.)

Yes.

TOM.

New?

GRACE.

Yes.

(TOM opens his eyes.)

No! No, no! You know—why—I—no! I've always had it—*always!!*

TOM.

Grace! What are you telling me lies for? Did you buy the thing?

GRACE.

(*Earnestly.*)

No! No. I didn't buy it.

TOM.

I didn't suppose so. (*Very quietly.*) Who gave it to you?

GRACE.

(*Aside.*)

Oh, I shall *never* do it. I shall never *dare* say it.

TOM.

What's that? You'll never "*dare?*" Eh?

GRACE.

I—I don't know anything about the ring. I—there! I never saw it before. I don't know whose it is.

TOM.

Nor the flowers?

GRACE.

Nor the flowers. You don't suppose (*pointing to her tea gown*) I went out and got them, do you?

TOM.

(*Very stern.*)

I do *not*. What I want to know is where did you get them from?

GRACE.

I—I assure you—I—I—

TOM.

(Who has picked up the visiting card.)

Mr.—R.—B.—Wilkins? Who's he?

(Looks up at her with stern gaze.)

GRACE.

I—I don't know.

TOM.

Oh! You don't know? Mr. R. B. Wilkins's card is here with some jewelry and flowers, and you say you don't know him.

GRACE.

(In gleeful and astonished, aside.)

Why! I'm doing it! I'm doing it without knowing it! This is all right.

TOM.

I want an explanation, do you hear? Who is this Wilkins and how does he dare to send you a ruby ring?

GRACE.

Oh, don't Tom! Don't! You frighten me.

TOM.

Answer me, Madam. Where have you met this man?

GRACE.

Nowhere! Nowhere! I don't know him.

TOM.

(Sarcastically.)

Oh! You don't know him! I suppose you will admit that you have seen him?

GRACE.

Y-ye-es. I've seen him. I've just seen him.
(Aside.) I must admit this if I'm to do it at all.

TOM.

Ah! You've seen him. How often?

GRACE.

(Trembling.)

Just once——or twice.

TOM.

(Blandly.)

Ah! Just once or twice!

GRACE.

(Aside.)

I am winning him back.

TOM.

(Roaring.)

And *how*, Madam——

(GRACE starts.)

do you account for your conduct in allowing a man whom you have seen once or twice to make you presents of jewelry? Has he been to this house?

GRACE.

(Falling on her knees.)

No! I swear it! Oh, Tom!

TOM.

Where have you met him? When did you speak to him?

GRACE.

Never! I have never spoken to him. I—I—

TOM.

And you want me to believe that a man who has just happened to see you—*where* did he see you?

GRACE.

I—I don't know. Out—just—at the window—in the street—when he was passing.

TOM.

You've been carrying on a vulgar flirtation from the window. Is that it?

GRACE.

Oh, forgive me, Tom!

TOM.

(*Somewhat mollified.*)

Well, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. As for Mr. Wilkins, of (*reading*) 23 Madison Square, I'll go and hunt him up and tell him what I think of him.

(*Puts his hand to his pistol pocket.*)

GRACE.

(*Shrieking.*)

No! Tom! Don't! You mustn't! It isn't his fault! It's me! It's all me! He knows nothing.

TOM.

What!

GRACE.

(*Desperately.*)

No! He doesn't know me! He doesn't know who I am.

TOM.

Do you mean to say that he doesn't know you are my wife?

GRACE.

(Wildly.)

No! No! He doesn't.

TOM.

Well, in that case the sooner he finds it out the better.

(Takes ring and tears a piece of paper off pad. Wrapping up the ring.)

Bring me a card.

GRACE.

What card?

TOM.

Your card. *(Severely.)* Mrs. Thomas Carrington's card. As for you, Madam, I shall have to deal with you later on.

(Wraps the flowers up angrily in large paper.)

GRACE.

(Who has brought a card from her desk.)

What are you going to do?

TOM.

(Icily.)

I am going to send the things back to him.

GRACE.

Oh, don't do that! Tom! Let me tell you——

TOM.

Not a word. Not a word until these damned things have been returned. Then according to what

you tell me, I will or will not break the man's head besides.

(Rises, rings bell and goes to M. E.)

GRACE.

(Running after him.)

But, Tom! You mustn't do that, you mustn't send——

(Enter servant.)

TOM.

(To GRACE.)

Silence! Barnes, take this to Mr. Wilkins, 23 Madison Square. Just round the corner. No answer. Leave it and come away.

(Exit servant.)

GRACE.

(Wringing her hands.)

Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What shall I do? What shall I do?

TOM.

(Putting his hands in his pockets and leaning against the mantelpiece.)

Now I am ready to hear your explanation.

GRACE.

Oh dear! Get those things back! Oh, how shall I tell you? Well, it was this morning—oh dear!—it was Ffine——

(FIFINE enters, rustling.)

FIFINE.

What about Ffine? Did you think I should not come back? My dearr! *(To GRACE.)* I missed

Rreginald! I thought I had trraind him prroperr-ly to wait for me at least one hour or two, and after forrty minutes off he goes! Ah, he needs trraining.

(Looking at them both.)

What's the matter?

TOM.

(Solemnly.)

Nothing at all, Madam. Nothing.

GRACE.

(As FIFINE turns interrogatively to her.)

Oh——nothing——

(Blinks and winks at her. FIFINE makes gesture to her finger. GRACE nods. FIFINE laughs softly, and nods encouragement to GRACE.)

FIFINE.

What about tea? Didn't you offer me some tea?

GRACE.

Yes. Yes, certainly. Tom would you mind telling Hobbs to serve tea in the drawing-room? I have such a headache you must excuse me, Fifine. I shall lie down a little——

FIFINE.

Why, of course, my poor little darling.

(Puts her arm round her. TOM has gone out ill humoredly.)

GRACE.

(Rapidly to FIFINE.)

Oh, I must tell you. Something dreadful has happened. Just think! Tom found——

FIFINE.

(Who has seen TOM re-enter.)

No, dear, don't do it. Don't take bromo-seltzer. Just rest a little quietly in here. Mr. Carrington will entertain me, and I will give him his tea. *(Loud aside to GRACE.)* Such beautiful eyes he has! *(To TOM.)* I will give you much cream, much sugarr, and much, much taffy. *(Taking his arm.)* Now don't tell me that men don't like sweet things. They like me! And am I not a sweet thing? *(Turning at the door to GRACE.)* I'll take carre of him Grracie.

(Breaks away from TOM, and running down to GRACE whispers something in her ear, while she pretends to smooth a pillow under her head.)

TOM.

(Watching them angrily.)

What are those two little devils hatching and plotting now, I wonder?

FIFINE.

(To GRACE, looking round at TOM.)

You are winning him back, dear!

(GRACE sighs. FIFINE runs back to TOM and they go out together.)

GRACE.

(Alone.)

What shall I do? How am I to get that ring back? What will this dreadful Mr. Wilkins think of "Mrs. Thomas Carrington," who sends him jew-

elry and flowers? And who—oh, *who* is Mr. Wilkins? I *must* ask Fifine.

(*Rises. Is interrupted by a servant entering.*)

SERVANT.

Mr. Wilkins, Ma'am.

GRACE.

Oh!

SERVANT.

Are you at home, Ma'am?

(*Excitedly.*)

Yes! Yes! I'm at home.

(*Exit SERVANT. Enter WILKINS. He wears an eyeglass and gazes with deep feeling at GRACE. He says everything with languor, but repressed feeling. He is pronouncedly and affectedly English in his accent.*)

WILKINS.

Madam——

GRACE.

(*Very timidly.*)

Mr.—Mr. Wilkins, (*with nervous hurry*) I am glad you have come.

WILKINS.

Weally? *Are you?* (*Steps forward.*) *Are you?*
Weally?

(*Takes her hand.*)

GRACE.

Y—yes, thank you. I—I have so much to tell you. I don't know how to begin. You are really Mr. Wilkins?

WILKINS.

Oh! call me Weggie! Call me Weggie, my deah!

GRACE.

What?

WILKINS.

(Tenderly.)

Never mind. Don't huwwy. There's no huwwy.

(Sits down close beside her and looks meltingly at her face.)

Let me help you to tell me all. I understand you. It was my last volume of poems, was it not? "The Lauwel and the Wose"—it was that that bwrought your heart to me?

GRACE.

I—I—no—I didn't read the poems.

WILKINS.

Ah! Then you were at my last lecture: "On the Fastidiousness of Beauty and the Beauty of Fastidiousness?" I knew that I was penetwating the sensitive soul of woman that day!

GRACE.

No, it wasn't that. It was——

(Stops.)

WILKINS.

(Coming nearer, still.)

What? Tell me, faiwest one, what led you to send me those unmistakable tokens of affection which I twarehouse heah!

(Unbuttons his coat and displays flowers.)

GRACE.

Oh dear! Dear!

WILKINS.

Do not be distwessed. I understand you so well!

(Pauses, twirling his moustache and gazing at her with a fatuous smile.)

These things aw always happening to me! Always.

GRACE.

(Aside.)

Oh, the dreadful creature!

WILKINS.

I had just weturned fwom Wector's, where I had an appointment with a charming little girl. Fwench, you know—all fwivol and fwills. But, *(languidly)* I happened to be an hour or so late, and so she had left —bwoken-hearted, you know. One cahn't weally keep up with them all. But you, my deah, you are exceptionally delightful with your delicate attentions. The wuby wing is charming. I shall keep it. I shall twarehouse it. I shall wear it day and night.

(Takes her hand.)

GRACE.

Oh! I must explain! It's all a mistake!

(Rises excitedly.)

WILKINS.

Yes. I know. I know. They always say that. It's all wight. *(Gazing at her.)* 'Pon my word, you're a wipping little cweature—wipping!

GRACE.

Sir! I must tell you—my husband—

WILKINS.

Yes. I know. I know. You needn't explain. Husband—howwid old bwute—neglects charming young wife. Young wife hears of me—sees me—sends me a wose and a wuby wing—

(Tenderly puts his arm about her.)

and now feels shy about it, that's all. *That's* all wight. Don't explain. There's no huwwy.

GRACE.

(Bursting with indignation.)

It's nothing of the sort. I meant nothing. *(Bursting into tears.)* I hate you! I've never seen you before. And I never want to see you again. *(Sobbing.)* And I want the ring back, and I want you to go away.

WILKINS.

Come, *(soothing her and patting her hand)* come. *(Aside.)* Hystewics! Don't be fluwvied. I understand you. It's all wight. I'll weturn your affections, my deah. Don't cwly.

GRACE.

(Suddenly breaking away from him and calling out at the top of her voice.)

Tom! Tom!

(WILKINS stands petrified with astonishment.)

WILKINS.

(Slowly, to himself.)

H'm. I'm in for a badgeah game, I pwesume.

(TOM enters followed by FIFINE.)

TOM.

What's up, Grace?

FIFINE.

(Flying past him and flinging herself upon WILKINS.)

Ah, Rreginald! My Rreginald! What do you here? You have followed me from Rrectorr's? How dearr you are! Grracie—this is Rreginald.

(GRACE bows with stony stare of amazement.)

Mr. Carrington, may I present to you Mr. Veelkeens?

(Accent on last syllable.)

TOM.

Glad to see you Mr. V'keens. Take a seat. *(To GRACE.)* My dear, what made you call out so?

GRACE.

(Bewildered.)

Nothing. Nothing.

FIFINE.

How did you find me, *Rreginald*? The waiter told you, what? I left word with him.

TOM.

Well, Mr. V'keens, have a cup of tea with us?

WILKINS.

(Dazed.)

Er-er-thank you. I—

FIFINE.

Yes. *Rreginald* loves tea. He is so English, he *drinks* nothing but tea. Like all English!

(Makes a little face and laughs.)

TOM.

I'll see that tea is brought in for you,

(Exit.)

FIFINE.

(To WILKINS.)

Ah! I was late at *Rrector's*, poor *Rreginald*! I kept you waiting nearly an hour! So naughty of me! *(Laughs.)* And *(to GRACE)* poor *Rreginald* is always so punctual. He goes an hour before so as not to miss me.

(GRACE looks scornfully at WILKINS, who smiles foolishly.)

FIFINE.

(Jumping up to meet TOM who enters with the servant carrying tea-tray.)

Ah! You are too good, Mr. Carrington.

(They stay in the background, pouring out tea.)

WILKINS.

(*To GRACE in tender undertone.*)

Pway, do not let this fwivolous episode bwuise your feelings. It is not sewious. If you love me as ardently as I can read in your eyes that you do, I will be yours fow evah! Fow evah!

GRACE.

Well! Of all the insolent puppies——

(*FIFINE comes forward with cup of tea which she hands to WILKINS. He sips it with his little finger in the air.*)

FIFINE.

(*Looking at his finger.*)

Why, Rreggie—what's that?

(*WILKINS hurriedly puts down his cup.*)

That—on your finger!

WILKINS.

(*Turning the ring around on his finger.*)

It's—er—it's a little wuby wing.

FIFINE.

A rruby rring?

TOM.

A ruby ring?

WILKINS.

(*Turning round and gazing amorously at GRACE.*)

Yes—a wuby wing.

SERVANT.

(Announcing.)

Mr. Rosenstein.

GRACE.

(Aside.)

Merciful Heavens!

TOM.

Who can *that* be?

FIFINE.

(Signaling to GRACE and replying to TOM.)

It's no one. It's for me, Mr. Carrington. I—I left word at home where I was going, and now everyone is following me here. I will go outside and——

(Goes quickly towards M. E.)

ROSENSTEIN.

(Appearing at the door.)

May I come een?

FIFINE.

(Hurriedly to ROSENSTEIN.)

I'll speak to you outside.

TOM.

(To ROSENSTEIN.)

By all means. Any friend of—Mademoiselle's—delighted—

ROSENSTEIN.

(To FIFINE who is trying to urge him out.)

No! He says come een. I come een.

(Bowling to GRACE and rubbing his hands.)

Now about that little matter——

GRACE.

(Bowing, without listening to him.)

Delighted to make your acquaintance, I am sure.

ROSENSTEIN.

Vaht I vahnted to say——

FIFINE.

Sit down. Sit down.

(Makes him sit in a corner of the sofa, and sits close to him, trying to screen him as much as possible from TOM and WILKINS.)

TOM.

(Who is near WILKINS, says to him in undertone.)

Queer looking fellow!

WILKINS.

Vewy.

ROSENSTEIN.

(Uneasily to GRACE.)

I haf not much time. Beesiness is beesiness, you know.

GRACE.

(Sits down on the other side of him, laughing effusively and rubbing her hands.)

Yes. Ha! ha! Of course.

(Pretending to make general conversation.)

Everyone now-a-days is of your opinion, Mr. Rosenstein. Ha! ha! Lovely weather! You are looking very well, Mr. Rosenstein.

(ROSENSTEIN looks bewildered. He turns from FIFINE, who is smiling at him on one side, to GRACE who is smiling sweetly at him on the other.)

ROSENSTEIN.

(To himself.)

Vaht are these vomans trying to do with me?
(To GRACE.) I came to tell you that you must pay
 me de balance or geef me de ring back, for I—

GRACE.

Have some tea, Mr. Rosenstein.

FIFINE.

Yes. Do have some nice hot tea—do.

*(They hurry to the table and get him a cup
 of tea.)*

ROSENSTEIN.

Dey vaht to steal dat ring, dot's vaht!

*(GRACE comes up to him with a cup, and
 FIFINE with the sugar bowl. He addresses
 them loudly.)*

Now about dat Rruby Ring—

TOM.

What's that?

*(GRACE drops the cup of tea over ROSEN-
 STEIN'S legs.)*

ROSENSTEIN.

(Jumping about in pain.)

Gott in Himmel! Vaht do you do?

GRACE.

I beg your pardon. Oh, I am so sorry.

FIFINE.

(Convulsed with laughter.)

Oh Grracie! *(Imitating ROSENSTEIN.)* "Vaht
 do you do?"

TOM.

(Apologetically to ROSENSTEIN.)

'Pon my word—too bad.

WILKINS.

Vewy sowwy—weally.

ROSENSTEIN.

*(Furious.)*Vaht I vahnt to know is about de Rring. *(To GRACE.)* If you don't keep dat Rring—

TOM.

Eh? What ring's that?

ROSENSTEIN.

I gave dat young lady to-day a Rring—a Rruby Ring—

(WILKINS listens with wide eyes.)

TOM.

Oh! *you* did, did you? So *you're* Wilkins, are you?

ROSENSTEIN.

Eh?

FIFINE.

No, no! What are you mixing up? This *(pointing to WILKINS)* is Rreginald.

TOM.

*(Very angry, staring at ROSENSTEIN and replying to FIFINE.)*Now, dear Madam, kindly leave this to me. *(To WILKINS.)* Mr. V'keens, excuse me. *(To ROSENSTEIN.)* So you are Wilkins, eh?

ROSENSTEIN.

I aint.

TOM.

Well, whoever you are, you admit having given jewelry to this lady—

ROSENSTEIN.

(Furious.)

Does she deny it? Does she dare deny it?

TOM.

This lady is my wife.

ROSENSTEIN.

I don't care whose wife she is. She got dot Rring from me—

TOM.

(Clenching his fist.)

I'll knock you down, Sir.

GRACE.

(Screaming and throwing her arms round her husband's neck.)

Tom! Tom!

FIFINE.

Let me explain.

WILKINS.

(With upraised hands.)

Weally—now weally—

ROSENSTEIN.

(Wildly pointing to WILKINS'S hand.)

Dere's de Rring! Dere's my Rruby Rring! On dat man!

TOM.

(Turning to WILKINS.)

What?

FIFINE.

*Rr*reginald! What does this mean?

ROSENSTEIN.

(*Wildly.*)

She gif away my R-r-ring—

TOM.

(*Turning on* ROSENSTEIN.)

Now, Mr. Wilkins, hold your tongue, sir. (To WILKINS.) What is this ruffian talking about.

WILKINS.

I—I—don't know what he's talking about. As for this wing, I—I—wefuse to speak about it.

(*Strikes heroic attitude.*)

FIFINE.

(*Hysterically.*)

Where did you get it, *R*reginald? I *will* know! You *must* tell me!

WILKINS.

Well, if you insist upon it, a—a lady, whom I wefuse to name, pwesented it to me.

TOM.

(*Excitedly.*)

What lady was that?

FIFINE.

Who was she?

ROSENSTEIN.

(*Pointing to* GRACE.)

It was her! You know it was her!

TOM.

(*Thunderingly to* ROSENSTEIN.)

Mr. Wilkins, Sir—

ROSENSTEIN.

I ain't—

WILKINS.

I—I—

FIFINE.

(Wildly.)

This, (*pointing*) this is Veelkeens. It is *Rreginald*.

GRACE.

(Covering her face.)

Oh dear! Oh dear!

TOM.

(Utterly bewildered.)

I don't understand anything. What are you all talking about? From whom did my wife get this ring?

ROSENSTEIN.

From me!

TOM.

(To WILKINS.)

Where did you get that ring?

WILKINS.

From your wife.

ROSENSTEIN.

Aha! You see?

FIFINE.

*(Wildly.)**Rreginald!! Oh, Rreginald!*

WILKINS.

And I wish women would not persecute me so, with offers of affection which I cannot wequite.

FIFINE.

Oh Grace! You snake! You vipair!

TOM.

(Wildly.)

What is the meaning of all this? I don't know what I'm talking about, I'm so mixed up.

ROSENSTEIN.

(Loudly and indignantly.)

You mix yourselves up because you change de stone! Ha! Dat's vaht! You change de stone all of you.

TOM.

What's he talking about? *(To GRACE.)* Am I to understand, Madam, that to shield this man *(pointing to ROSENSTEIN)*, this scoundrel, this blackguard, this hound—

(Wild indignation on the part of ROSENSTEIN.)

to shield him, I say, from the consequences of my just anger you have allowed me to send that ruby ring to this—this *(pointing to WILKINS)* conceited ass?

FIFINE.

How dare you, Sir, how dare you? *(Bursting into tears.)* My Rreginald!

GRACE.

(In utter despair.)

If you will allow me to explain—

ROSENSTEIN.

A tief, Madam! You are all tiefs!

TOM.

(Roaring.)

Silence!

ROSENSTEIN.

(Mumbling.)

I haf you all arrested.

GRACE.

(Explaining.)

Well—it was because—it was like this—Fifine said that I *(sobbing)* ought to win—oooh!—you—back!

TOM

What?

FIFINE.

(Going up provocatively to GRACE.)

That was not a reason, Madam, to try and lure Rreginald away frrom me.

GRACE.

(Indignant.)

Pfui! I wouldn't have him if you gave him to me. I think you're crazy. I did nothing of the kind.

FIFINE.

You did! You know you did. You always were a horrid jealous disposition *(in tears)* and now because Rreginald loved me and your horrid husband neglected you, you—you *(sobbing)* tried to get him away from me.

TOM.

Well, I never!

GRACE.

I wouldn't *look* at the ridiculous idiot! I wouldn't for the world!

FIFINE.

(Louder, above the others who are all talking together.)

And if I had *liked* to flirt with your husband, he *would* have, only he's so horrid I didn't care to.

GRACE.

(Slapping FIFINE.)

He isn't!

FIFINE.

(Slapping GRACE.)

There! He is!

(WILKINS holds FIFINE back, and TOM catches hold of GRACE.)

ROSENSTEIN.

This is all a put up jop to steal from me my R-ruby R-ring. I go and get you all arrested.

(Moves to the door.)

TOM.

(Going after him.)

If you dare!

(Catches hold of him.)

ROSENSTEIN.

I haf you all ar-*r*-rested for stealing my goods and holding my person vile I miss a sale. *(Wildly, clasp- ing his hands.)* Gott in Himmel! I miss a sale!

TOM.

(Shaking him and tearing his coat.)

What are you talking about? What do you want?

ROSENSTEIN.

I vahnt my R-ring back or de balance of de money —dat's vaht I vahnt.

GRACE.

Oh, Tom, pay him, if—if this gentleman won't give him back the ring.

WILKINS.

Eh!

GRACE.

(To TOM.)

It's only forty dollars.

ROSENSTEIN.

Tree hahndred and feefy dahlars. Not one penny less, or I haf you all arrested—you, Madam, for giving away my goods; you (*To WILKINS*) for keeping stolen goods; you (*To TOM*) for violence to my person (*showing torn coat*); and you (*To FIFINE*) for being a sharp and a crook. Tree hahndred and feefy dahlars!

FIFINE.

(Taking the ring from WILKIN'S hand and throwing it on the table.)

Why, take your old ring!

ROSENSTEIN.

I refuse. I haf missed the sale. And (*looking at the ring against the light*), you haf changed de stone.

FIFINE AND GRACE.

(Together.)

What?

ROSENSTEIN.

Dat's vaht I say. You haf changed de stone. (*Smiles complacently and puts down the ring.*) Dat's no ruby. Dat's a piece of glass. Tree hahndred and feefy dahlars, or you all go to jail.

TOM.

Well, upon my word!

GRACE.

But I gave you sixty on account.

ROSENSTEIN.

Dat's r-right. Ve had arranged for four hahndred and ten dahlars for de ring. Hadn't ve?

FIFINE AND GRACE.

(Together.)

Oh! Did you ever!!

ROSENSTEIN.

Remains tree hahndred and feefty dahlars.

WILKINS.

(Languidly.)

'Pon my word—I don't know what it's all about—but if the beggah will take my check, I'll pay for it and buy the old thing, don't you know. *(To ROSENSTEIN.)* I'm Weginald Wilkins, of 23 Madison Square—

ROSENSTEIN.

(Bowing and rubbing his hands.)

Ach, yes! Dat vill be all r-right. I know you. Your check—verry good, verry good.

WILKINS.

(Writing check and speaking to FIFINE.)

And if my deah little Fifine will accept the doosid thing as an engagement wing, it will save me so *much* twouble in going to select one, you know.

FIFINE.

Oh, *R*reginald! My darling! How noble, how dear, how English you are!

(Puts on the ring.)

ROSENSTEIN.

(Pocketing the check, bowing and rubbing his hands.)

You haf a bargain. A bargain, I say. De r-ruby alone—vaht?

WILKINS.

(Languidly raising his foot and kicking him gently.)

Get out.

ROSENSTEIN.

(At door.)

De r-ruby alone, vaht I said, de r-ruby alone, as a *vahnderful* imitation, is worth—

(WILKINS lifts him by the collar and puts him out.)

GRACE.

(In foreground, tearfully to TOM.)

It was because of the bill of fare.

TOM.

Because of the *what?*

GRACE.

(Taking it from the bosom of her dress.)

The—the—this *(sobbing)*. It's an *immoral* bill of fare! F'fine said so.

TOM.

(Looking at it.)

How does she know? “Martinis—caviare—foie gras—oysters—” the devil!

GRACE.

(Excitedly.)

What? You said—

TOM.

(Reading.)

The devilled lobster—I was reading—“Clicquot, two bottles—”

GRACE.

A wicked, immoral supper!

TOM.

(Looking at her with a whimsical smile.)

Well—if you say so—

GRACE.

(Bursting into sobs.)

And on our honeymoon trip, too!

TOM.

(Looking at her quietly.)

Yes. The second day, I believe.

(GRACE stops crying and looks at him. Little by little she smiles and then looks very shy.)

GRACE.

Oh Tom!

TOM.

(Imitating her.)

A most immoral—

GRACE.

(Covers his mouth with her hand, laughing.)

Don't! Tom!

(TOM catches hold of her hand and kisses it.)

FIFINE.

(Coming up.)

Well! Have you forgiven him for that supper?

GRACE.

(Smiling and embarrassed.)

It's all right, F'fine. I—I was there—too!

FIFINE.

What? You, too?

GRACE.

Yes. I, too—we two—us!

(Takes TOM'S arm and laughs.)

WILKINS.

(To TOM.)

I *beg* your pardon—but *would* you mind lending me that bill of fare? I shall be going to Paris in a month—with F'fine—and-er-having this kind of thing all weady, witten down, would save such a *lot* of twouble, don't you know.

TOM.

(Laughing and giving him the bill of fare.)

Why, by all means. We don't need it any more. Do we Gracie?

GRACE.

Oh! Tom!

(They embrace.)

CURTAIN.

